Header/Sender Name

Title

Organization if Applicable

Address

Contact Information

Recipient Name

Title

Organization

Address

**Re: Medical Credentialing Application Change Request**

To the Credentialing Committee [insert Chair’s name, if known];

I am writing as a [licensed physician/medical student] in [clinic/hospital/system name], to ask for assistance on a pressing issue for physicians. As you know, physicians are experiencing more challenges to their well-being and mental wellness than ever due to COVID (1), and many leaders are seeking ways to reduce barriers to physicians seeking mental health care. Despite this, medical licensing and credentialing applications that ask questions about mental health may deter physicians from seeking mental health care (2), and some applications that ask questions about mental health may violate the Americans with Disabilities Act (3).  There are national recommendations on how to ask questions about mental health and how to provide supportive language to physicians on taking care of their health, including mental health (4,5,6).

Presently our [clinic/hospital/system]’s credentialing application does not fully follow expert recommendations in that it contains questions about the applicant’s mental health history or treats physical and mental health differently (4,5,7):

[add the text from the application]

I’m respectfully requesting the Committee consider changing these questions so that they do not stigmatize mental health diagnoses or help-seeking behavior. In addition, the credentialing application should include text that is supportive of physicians seeking mental health care when needed, such as:

*“It is common for physicians to feel overwhelmed from time to time and to seek help when appropriate. The Credentialing Committee at [clinic/hospital/system] recognizes the importance of clinician well-being and appropriate treatment and support for all health conditions.”*

Thank you for your consideration of this vital topic, and I hope we may speak about the Credentialing Committee considering this change.

Sincerely,

[signature, title, contact information]

References:

1.     Lai  J﻿, Ma  S﻿, Wang  Y﻿,  et al.  Factors associated with mental health outcomes among health care workers exposed to coronavirus disease 2019. ﻿ *JAMA Netw Open*. 2020;3(3):e203976.

2.     Dyrbye  LN﻿, West  CP﻿, Sinsky  CA﻿, Goeders  LE﻿, Satele  DV﻿, Shanafelt  TD﻿.  Medical licensure questions and physician reluctance to seek care for mental health conditions. ﻿ *Mayo Clin Proc*. 2017;92(10):1486-1493.

3.     James T.R. Jones, Carol S. North, Suzanne Vogel-Scibilia, Michael F. Myers, Richard R. Owen. Medical Licensure Questions About Mental Illness and Compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act. *J of the Am Acad of Psych and the Law* Online Dec 2018, 46 (4) 458-471; DOI: 10.29158/JAAPL.003789-18

4.     Candilis PJ, Kim DT, Sulmasy LS, for the ACP Ethics, Professionalism and Human Rights Committee. Physician impairment and rehabilitation: reintegration into medical practice while ensuring patient safety: a position paper from the American College of Physicians. Ann Intern Med. 2019;170:871-9.

5. Federation of State Medical Boards. Physician Wellness and Burnout. Published April 2018. Accessed March 16, 2021. <https://www.fsmb.org/siteassets/advocacy/policies/policy-on-wellness-and-burnout.pdf>

6.     Saddawi-Konefka D, Brown A, Eisenhart I, Hicks K, Barrett E, Gold JA. Consistency Between State Medical License Applications and Recommendations Regarding Physician Mental Health. *JAMA.* 2021;325(19):2017–2018. doi:10.1001/jama.2021.2275

7.     Story J, Solberg D. Barriers to Mental Illness and Substance Abuse Treatment Among Physicians and the Impact on Patient Care. *Mo Med*. 2017;114(2):91-93.

8.     Barrett, E, Lawrence, E, Waldman, D, Brislen, H. Improving How State Medical Boards Ask Physicians About Mental Health Diagnoses: A Case Study from New Mexico*. Ann Intern Med* 172:617–618, 2020.